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AGRICULTURAL REPORT,

From January 20, till February 20.

THE weather has continued remarkably mild for the Season; during the last four weeks, very little frost or storm has intervened to interrupt the progress of the Plough, and notwithstanding this, there appears but a small proportion of the land designed for Corn, turned up in many parts of the country.

Wheat in most districts has a favourable appearance, and we may hope for a plentiful crop of that grain this year, to compensate for the deficiency of the last.

Very little alteration has taken place in the prices of grain since last report, there is as yet no certainty of the public licensed stills being allowed to work, which if determined in the affirmative, it has been alleged, would considerably raise the price of oats; and indeed considering that such an opinion has been generally circulated, it is not improbable that oats and oat meal would advance for some time, but it is also probable that the rise would be only temporary.

The last year's crop of oats was certainly a good one, and there is a large stock in the country.

The distillers could not afford to give a high price for grain, and they would consequently limit their agents in that respect, and if proper measures are pursued to suppress the private stills, which it is the duty of the Government and the interest of the country to do; there seems very little, if any reason for apprehending that a scarcity will be the consequence, of preferring public to private distillation, a legal productive manufacture to a clandestine and wasteful consumption of grain, which corrupts the morals of the people in the districts where it is carried on, occasions a great deficiency in the revenue, and must compel the government to lay on additional taxes, to supply the want.

The openness of the weather during the winter months, has been favourable for saving hay and straw; and the scarcity expected to have resulted from the loss by floods and heavy rains, in the hay season, will not be much felt.

COMMERCIAL REPORT.

BOTH in and out of parliament, the praises of our great trade are trumpeted forth, but it is not all gold that glitters. Great as are the entries at the custom-houses, many articles are sent to distant markets, as for instance, to South America, where the sale is uncertain, and the profits eventually often very small, and in some cases the adventures are attended with loss. In forming the estimates of our real state, many deductions must on these accounts be made: but even if trade flourished more than is really the case, the wisdom of our orders in council and other commercial regulations is not proved. Trade does not flourish in consequence of these pernicious regulations, but rather their baneful influence has not hitherto proved able to repress our commercial energies.

The United States of North America still present an appearance of hostility. Pressed by France, and irritated by England, they find it difficult to preserve their neutral rights. War with one or both of the contending parties will probably be the result. In the meantime, trade suffers from the fluctuating accounts which arrive in succession, and almost daily change the appearance of the markets for American produce.

The late linen market in Dublin was unusually bad for fine linens. Coarse linens, which were rather scarce, sold but at reduced prices, compared with those obtained at the former market. Some of the linens bought some months ago, on speculation, sold at nine-pence per yard under the prices at which they were bought. The speculators deserved to suffer, as by their schemes, they materially deranged the regular state of the manufacture. These linens selling at such reduced rates, obstructed the usual sales; the buyers still holding off, in hopes of obtaining similar bargains.

Distillation from grain is likely to be permitted in Ireland. The policy of this measure is very questionable, for although the harvest was pretty abundant in Ireland, and potatoes, our essential support, in plenty, still England is not secure from the danger of prices rising too high. A stop should be put to illicit distillation, as destructive to morals and injurious to the revenue. It is at present carried on to a great extent both in Ireland and Scotland. If importations of grain from France, which are so rapidly draining from us the remains of our species, were stopped, and the English market exclusively confined to their own produce, and the importations from Ireland, the Irish land-holder would probably have no just cause to complain of low prices.

It is cause of regret that our collieries are so badly wrought in Ireland. Want of capital may be one cause. A present profit is sought without regard to permanent advantage, and so long as a small supply of inferior coals is procured, the proprietors will not be at the trouble and expense to sink deeper for good coal, although they might reasonably expect to be ultimately amply compensated. These remarks apply to the coal-pits near Dungannon and Coalisland in the county of Tyrone. At present the neighbourhood is supplied with coals of a very inferior quality, at the high price of 16*s. 8d* per ton, at the pits, which, considering the quality, and the rapidity with which they burn, are dearer than English coal, at more than double the price. If these pits were judiciously and vigorously wrought, coals of a vastly superior quality might probably be procured, and the sale greatly extended, so as to be of much national advantage.

It is said that peculation has been discovered by the board of commissioners of inquiry in Ireland, in an officer of a certain board, connected with the staple trade of this country. We wish no attempts will be made to screen offenders, but that inquiry may be still further extended. A trade established in a country now upwards of a century should be able to stand alone. Boards may expend much of the public money in the way of patronage and in injudicious schemes, without materially benefiting the manufacture.

The bounty on saving flaxseed has been equally extended to that saved from flax that has not been stacked. If there was any use in the premium, the alteration was proper, though it is probable that more has been lost in the attempts to save seed, than the value of the quantity saved. A trade which cannot be carried on without bounties must be unprofitable. In a commercial point of view the system is bad; to the friend of liberty, they are also highly objectionable, as unduly increasing the patronage and influence of government.

The depreciation of bank notes proceeds in England with rapid strides, and as the traffic in buying and selling guineas is not open and avowed, the liability to imposition is greatly increased. The situation of trade at present is very similar to the state which preceded the restriction on the bank in 1797, not to pay in specie. This measure proved our declining credit. The balance usually due from foreign countries to Great Britain had been diminished from the commencement of the war in 1793, by the subsidies granted to foreign powers, by the expenditures of our armies on the continent, and the extraordinary demand for corn to supply the deficiency of the bad harvest of 1795, to which must be added the Austrian loan of seven millions just then negotiated. The price of bullion rapidly rose, when it was found necessary to send gold to the continent to pay the balance due by Great Britain, and the mint declined to coin in such large quantities. For twelve years ending with the year 1796, £2,500,000 a year had been issued during the first ten years, and only £500,000 a year during the last two years, and this omission could only have proceeded from the price of bullion being above the price of gold in coin. It suited at that time the plans of Pitt, by establishing paper money to keep up the funds, and make his taxes productive, and he brought forward the bank restriction act. The consequence was as might have been foreseen, a rise on all the articles of life, occasioned by the inordinate issue of paper, as the check of paying in specie was removed both from the national banks and from private bankers. The circulating medium was increased in quantity, and decreased in value. These effects were manifested by a greater quantity being given for every article. All these causes have been lately greatly aggravated by the costly expeditions to Spain, Portugal and Holland, by the policy of Bonaparte excluding, in a great measure, our manufactures from the continent, by the impolicy of our Orders in Council, preventing the trade of North America with the continent of Europe, which formerly supplied a fund to pay the balance due to the powers of the Baltic, and finally, by the large quantities of wheat lately imported from France, and which was paid for in specie. Thus, the fact of depreciation is daily becoming more manifest, and forces itself on public attention, in the course of its alarming and rapidly accelerating progress.

In our last report, an error slipped into the account of the prosecution of the Jew. The charge against him was for *selling* not *buying* guineas. Among the occurrences, at page 148, will be found an account of this interesting case. From the vagueness of the indictment, we shall be disappointed, if an independent Jury pronounce him guilty, or find on their oaths, that a bank of England note is really worth in specie, the amount marked on it.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact premium on guineas in London at present, as the trade in them is clandestine; they are certainly very scarce. We have heard they do not bring less than from 1s. 6d. to 2s. per guinea, or from 7½ to 10 per cent. From the quantity bought in Belfast to send to Dublin, to be there sold for transmission to England, this country is likely soon to be stripped of the small quantity at present in circulation amongst us.

Exchange on London, is for bank notes in Belfast, 8½ to 9½ per cent, and for guineas 6 to 6½. Discount on bank notes has risen to 2½ and 2¾ per cent.

NATURALIST'S REPORT.

From January 20, till February 20.

Where now the subtle energy that moved
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph,
Through th' imperceptible meand'ring veins,
Or leat and blow'r? It sleeps; and th' icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impressed
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.

COWPER'S TASK, BOOK 6.

THE continually changing face of nature presents from day to day, fresh subjects worthy of contemplation; the variety of temperature, and its effects on animals and vegetables is often so surprizing, as to bid defiance to the keenest research, yet although we cannot penetrate to the inmost recesses of the Temple of Nature, we never endeavour to investigate the Mysteries without advantage. After the most piercing frost, many young and apparently tender seedlings escape the rigorous cold without injury, while the gentlest autumnal frost would kill the same species, when arrived at a state of maturity. Attentive gardeners taking advantage of this vital energy possessed by plants while in a vigorous state of growth, cut them down at that period, in order to prevent this latent principle from being expended in the production of flowers and seed.

From the same cause a variety of plants bear transplanting in spring, when the vital principle is in action, which would not succeed were they removed in Autumn, or through the winter, while their juices were inactive.

It has long been remarked by gardeners, that the holly, and most evergreen trees and shrubs, agreed best with transplanting late in spring; but few have observed that the particular period was pointed out by the swelling of the buds and evolving of the leaves, and for want of attention to this sign, many plants are lost by premature transplanting.

The mildness of the season promised an early spring, many of the bulbous-rooted plants had risen high above ground, early Crocuses began to show their flower buds, and the buds of various trees had begun to swell, when the late severe weather checked their further progress, and we may now hope that the wintry blast will be completely exhausted before our fruit trees blossom.

January 23, The Wood Lark (*Alauda Arborea*) singing.

28, Snow-drops (*Galanthus nivalis*) began to flower, their beautiful buds appeared some time ago.

30, Made the first sowing of peas.

31, Single blue Hepatica (*Anemone Hepatica*) flowering.

February 3, Great blue Titmouse, or Tom Tit (*Parus major*) singing.

4, Some flowers blown on a red Mezereon (*Daphne Mezereum*).

6, Some flowers blown off the common Primrose (*Primula Acaulis*) and Pilewort (*Ranunculus Ficaria*.)